

Common Core State Standards Top the 2014 What's Hot, What's Not Survey

by Jack Cassidy and Stephanie Grote-Garcia

To no one's surprise, the *Common Core State Standards* are, collectively, the "hottest" item on the 2014 "What's Hot" list of literacy-related topics. Of the 25 literacy leaders interviewed for this year's survey, only one person stated that the topic was "not hot," and that person did so because she had not seen changes in the classroom as a result of the implementation of the Standards. Almost every other "very hot" topic on the annual list is in some way related to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The chart on page 13 lists the results of the latest survey. Of course, we always remind readers and respondents that "hot" is not synonymous with "important." Similarly "not hot" or "cold" is not equivalent to "unimportant." Had we asked respondents if the topics were important, our results would probably be very different.

The Seven Very Hot Topics

Of the seven very hot topics on this year's list, four were on the list last year:

- *Common Core State Standards*
- *College and career readiness*
- *Informational/non fiction texts*
- *High-stakes assessment*

The three topics new to the very hot category on the 2014 survey are:

- *Close reading/deep reading*
- *Disciplinary/content area literacy*
- *Text complexity*

Common Core State Standards

Having now been adopted by 45 states as well as numerous territories and the Department of Defense schools, the CCSS (www.corestandards.org) are driving the literacy agenda in the United States as well as the items on the "What's Hot" list. The CCSS were an outgrowth of the previously developed *college and career readiness* standards and were developed by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The fact that the Standards were developed by non governmental national groups has undoubtedly contributed to their popularity.

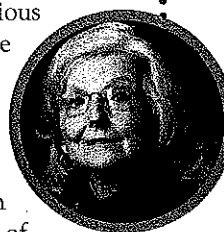
Broad Focus on the ELA Component

The English Language Arts (ELA) standards of the CCSS remain relatively the same over various grade levels. However, the document takes great pains to demand increasing *text complexity* and carefully defines exactly what is meant by text complexity. Although ELA is the shortened form of

this set of standards, the full title is "Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects." It is the second half of this title that has undoubtedly made *disciplinary/content area literacy* a very hot topic.

Disciplinary/content area literacy embeds a discourse that has been with us for nearly a century: first in assessing older students' reading comprehension and more recently in focusing on specialized ways that students use reading, writing, and language to interpret and produce texts involving both print and digital media. Somewhat predictably, this discourse emerges in times of crisis and then fades until the next crisis is declared. Currently its visibility might best be used to clarify misperceptions or misapplications of various policies, especially given that disciplinary/content area literacy does not look the same in different disciplines taught by different teachers interacting with different students in different classroom environments having different social structures.

Donna Alvermann
University of Georgia



What's Hot and What's Not? Survey Results	What's Hot	What's Not	Should Be Hot	Should Not Be Hot
Adolescent literacy (-)	●		●●●	
Close reading/deep reading *	●●		●●	
College and career readiness	●●		●●	
Comprehension (-)	●		●●	
Common Core Standards	●●		●●	
Critical reading and writing		●	●●	
Digital literacies	●		●●	
Disciplinary/content area literacy (+)	●●		●●	
Differentiated instruction		●	●●	
Early intervention (K-3) (-)		●	●●	
English Learners/English as a second language	●		●●	
Fluency		●●		●
Formative assessment		●	●●	
High-stakes assessment	●●			●
Informational/nonfiction texts	●●		●●	
International comparisons *		●		●
Literacy coaches/reading coaches/reading specialists		●●	●●	
Motivation/engagement		●●	●●●	
Phonemic awareness (+)		●●		●●
Phonics (+)		●●		●●
Political/policy influences on literacy	●		●●	
Preschool literacy instruction/experiences (+)	●		●●●	
Professional development (inservice)		●	●●	
Response to Intervention (-)		●	●	
Struggling readers (grade 4 and above)		●	●●●	
Teacher education for reading (preservice)		●	●●	
Text complexity (+)	●●		●●	
Vocabulary/word meaning	●		●●	
Writing		●	●●●	

Key

- or ● indicates that more than 50 percent of the respondents were in agreement ("hot" or "not hot")
- or ●● indicates that at least 75 percent of the respondents were in agreement ("very hot" or "cold")
- or ●●● indicates that all the respondents were in agreement ("extremely hot" or "extremely cold")
- (+) Indicates the topic was hotter for 2014 than 2013
- (-) Indicates the topic was less hot for 2014 than 2013
- * Indicates new topic for 2014